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ABSTRACT

This publication is the complete transcription of a weekly radio program devoted to contemporary issues in American education. This particular program consisted of an informal debate on various educational issues between Terry Herndon, executive director of the National Education Association (NEA), and Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The debate focuses primarily on the general topic of collective bargaining in education, and more specifically on the role of unions in education and on the differences and competition between the NEA and the AFT. (JG)

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"THE GREAT DEBATE"

TERRY HERNDON
Executive Director
of the
National Education Association

vs.

ALBERT SHANKER
President
of the
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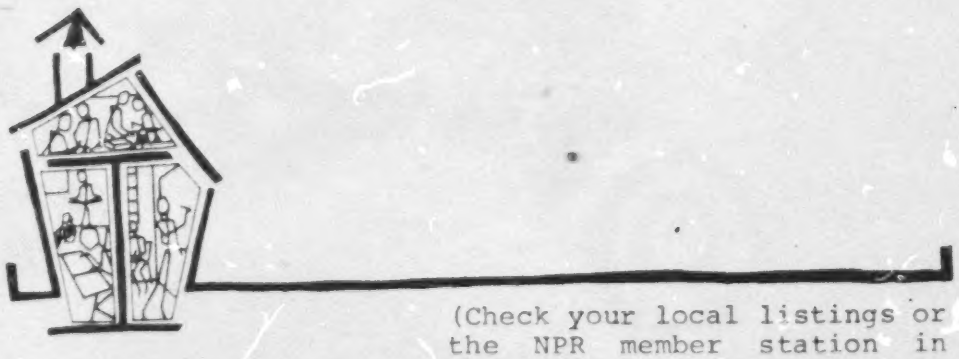

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"THE GREAT DEBATE"

TERRY HERNDON vs. ALBERT SHANKER

MERROW: This is John Merrow. This week on OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, the leaders of America's two teacher unions debate the issues. Terry Herndon and Albert Shanker are probably the two most powerful people in American education.

Terry Herndon is Executive Director of the National Education Association. And Albert Shanker is President of the American Federation of Teachers.

Mr. Herndon, 37, has been Executive Director of the much larger NEA, since 1973.

Mr. Shanker, 48, catapulted to national attention when he led New York City teachers out on several strikes in the early 1960's.

The two unions flirted with merger for a while in the early 1970's, and a few local and state affiliates did merge. The biggest obstacle to merger has always been the AFT's affiliation with George Meaney's AFL-CIO. Today, however, the two unions are struggling - particularly in New York State to control the teacher union movement and to reverse the declining fortunes of public schools. We've asked them here to discuss the "State of the Unions."

What are the differences between the two unions? Mr. Shanker?

SHANKER: Well, at one time the NEA wouldn't take teachers in until the AFT came along, and then the NEA was against collective bargaining until the AFT led the way on that. And, then, the NEA was against strikes until the AFT led the way on that. The AFT has had quite a role - not only in growing as an organization on its own, but in shaping the policy of the National Education Association over all these years.

I would say that the major differences are the questions of whether teachers can be isolationists -- whether they can "go it alone", whether they can fight for their own benefits and expect other people to pay for them and support them -- or whether they have to be part of a much broader movement, which includes other people who work for a living.

MERROW: So, you want the AFT - and all teachers - to be a part of a larger labor movement, and you're saying that the NEA does not. Mr. Herndon?

HERNDON: Well, what Al describes as "isolation" I would describe with different words. I think the teachers that make up the NEA, 1.8 million of them--think that they're large enough a group, with sufficient capacity, to preserve their independence and establish relationships with other organizations on an ad hoc basis. I don't think there is a great deal of difference in terms of our awareness of contemporary reality, or approaching a wide variety of issues.

The NEA, for example, is committed to welfare reform, and works here in the Capital with the people who are committed to welfare reform. We're committed to tax reform, and work with the people who are committed to tax reform. We're committed to National Health Insurance. We're committed to full employment, and the Humphrey-Hawkins Bill, and all of those things that are necessary to get the country back into a healthy economic position so that it has the capacity to support quality schools.

MERROW: But you don't think that teachers should be part of the larger labor movement - the AFL-CIO?

HERNDON: No, we do not. And that is a basic difference between us.

MERROW: Why not?

HERNDON: We have many places where our people in a given state have made major investments in tax reform campaigns, and they were opposed by the AFL-CIO. We have other places where they made substantial investments in things such as parochaid; trying to deny the use of public money for private schools. They were opposed by the labor leadership. That kind of residual hostility is an important part of the feeling there.

There are other places in the country where our state Teachers Association has been around for 100 years. They have established a significant role in the politics of that state. They have powerful political relationships. There is no strong labor movement to be aligned with. And the banner itself may cause them some losses in terms of their historical gains.

And we have others who believe that in terms of contemporary issues - such as the Southeast Asia military involvement, the whole Defense budget - the AFL-CIO positions are not in the best interests of schools and increasing Federal expenditures.

Generally, we respect the AFL-CIO. We think it has served its membership - that being, basically, a private sector membership - well. We think it has served the American public, and it's been a part of many major social reforms.

MERROW: Mr. Shanker?

SHANKER: Well, Mr. Herndon tells us that the NEA also is working on all these issues, but if you looked at the NEA's newspaper or the time that they devoted at their convention to these things, I think that to many NEA members this broadcast will be the first time that they will have heard that the NEA is interested in the Humphrey-Hawkins Bill, or tax reform -- because that just does not appear in any of the publications, and it's just not a thrust of their conventions or their speeches or anything else.

But, you, know, in this last year, there were a number of bills which the President vetoed, and which the House of Representatives voted to

over-ride, and we missed in the Senate by mostly three votes on a number of these. One of them was a $6 billion Public Works Bill, which had billions of dollars in it for public employees - as well as for employees in the private sector. I never saw a telegram or a press release from the NEA on any of these things.

And some of the discussion right here about the AFL-CIO opposing tax reform. That isn't what Mr. Herndon means. He means that the AFL-CIO on a number of ocassions has opposed very regressive sales taxes, which would hurt the poor fellow who's got to go out and buy his food and clothing and his groceries and things like that. And that's something that the NEA calls tax reform. Well, the average worker would prefer to see a progressive income tax, or something that would take the money from those who have it.

As far as the question about the private and parochial school dollars -- there is really no question about where we stand on that. I've been an appellant in each of the Supreme Court decisions, which has now sharpened it so that there really is very little that can go to parochial schools.

I think that still is the major issue. The major issue is the lack of concern on some of these other issues, and I'm saying that teachers ought to be concerned with these other issues for a number of reasons. First, because they're citizens, and they're supposed to be involved. But from a teacher point-of-view, as long as public dollars are going into unemployment insurance - as long as they're going into welfare - as long as they're going into these other fields - these are dollars that are not going to be available for education.

This massive unemployment we have right now is directly related to the lay-offs of teachers, and to the lack of money in this field. It's another indication. There's a whole effort on the part of the Ford Administration to kill the Food Stamp Program. There's a coalition of over 60 organizations in this country that went to court and prevented the President from doing it. And the NEA was not on that list.

You can go through the last four or five years - whether it was Haynesworth and Carswell, the Supreme Court Justices - or whether it was Civil Rights legislation - or whether it was the over-ride of the veto on the Public Works Bill - the NEA was just not there. They're there only on a sort of narrow, gimme, gimme. And then they expect everyone in the world to be sympathetic to teachers - when the teachers are never there when other people need help.

MERROW: Mr. Herndon?

HERNDON: I think that's simply a misrepresentation of reality. We're not party to every coalition in this city. We were not party to the coalition which filed the Food Stamp litigation. On the other hand, we are a member of the Committee on National Health Insurance. We contribute $1,000 a month to that operation. The AFT is not there. I do not suggest that they are not committed to National Health Insurance. We're not a member of every coalition.

SHANKER: You're wrong about the AFT not being there. We are. Dave Seldon was there before me. And I'm a member of that now. And we contribute - as does the AFL-CIO, as you know very well.

MERROW: But tell me - What do teachers gain by remaining independent of the organized labor movement and occasional coalitions?

HERNDON: They gain the capacity to represent their own interests as they see fit. They gain independence from the issues in which they don't believe they have an interest. They gain independence on the issues where they think their representation is contrary to their interests.

Early last year, the AFL-CIO Executive Council took a position which favored an increase in the Defense Budget. They thought that Ford's budget was too low. We disagreed with that. We were in no way implicated in that decision.

MERROW: And you're saying that Mr. Shanker's AFT is implicated because it's part of the AFL-CIO?

HERNDON: Well, I think that's part of the problem. I think that's part of the reason why Mr. Shanker's organization did not testify when the Congress was setting budget ceilings on education.

MERROW: Mr. Shanker, what happens there when you disagree? And your group, the AFT, disagrees with positions taken by the AFL-CIO? Are you wedded to them?

SHANKER: No. Every union is free to go its own way. I might say that on that question of military budgets that there was no dissenting vote on the Council of the AFL-CIO. And when someone says - "Take it out of the military and put it into somewhere else." - I could get a lot of people standing and applauding that way. But I have a feeling that if our own military situation were not as weak as it is right now, we wouldn't be facing this tremendous inflation. The price of oil would not have gone up as it would have. Our whole position in the world would have been quite different. And these things are related to not only the security of our country, but to teacher welfare as well.

I don't agree with the position that just says - "This country should disarm unilaterally."

MERROW: We were talking about distinctions between the AFT and the NEA. The "public employee" aspect of it is a distinction that we've skirted. We haven't really described it. NEA belongs to something called CAPE - Coalition of American Public Employees. AFT does not. And, Mr. Shanker, a number of times you've talked about the necessity for bringing public and private employees together. Why?

SHANKER: If public employees are not to be viewed as a kind of a conspiracy - if it's not to be viewed as a conspiracy against the public - I think they've got to be a part of something that's a lot broader. They've got to be fighting for items that are in the general public interest; items that will help them and help others as well. Otherwise, I think it's doomed to defeat, and I think that already there is a public backlash to the public employees being by themselves, and fighting for only what's in their own interest. And I think we see that all across the country now.

MERROW: And you're saying that part of the problem now is that the public employees are isolated like that. Mr. Herndon, what's the rationale for having a Coalition of American Public Employees, and not bringing public and private together?

HERNDON: Well, I think to suggest that we're setting the state for a public employees versus the public is an oversimplification of political reality in the United States. I don't know that there is any such general thing as the "public." Our political system is competing groups of interest. I think that public employees have some unique interests which they share . . . .

MERROW: Like what?

HERNDON: Such as the denial of collective bargaining rights under Federal law. Such as their exclusion from many of the unemployment protections provided by Federal law. Such as differential treatment of their pension programs under Federal law. Such as the exclusion of many public employees from Social Security. You can go right on down the line. In many respects, public employees have been denied the kinds of benefits and rights that have been granted by the Federal government to private employees. And I think they need a center - to work together, to coordinate their efforts to pursue equity, to pursue justice. And, indeed, there is throughout the United States, on a localized basis, some political reaction to the games that have been won by public employees. I think Al is perfectly correct about that. But I don't believe that reaction is in any way related to the formation of the Coalition of American Public Employees. Nor do I think it's related to the formation of the Public Employee Department of the AFL-CIO. It's related to the kind of inconveniences created for communities when public employees and the Boards which employ them have conflict, and public services are disrupted. And it's related secondarily to the tax burden that many people think is excessive. I don't agree with that. I certainly intend to do what I can do to persuade the public that - or the oppositional segments of the public - that they're incorrect about that.

MERROW: We began by talking about differences between the two groups. And, Mr. Shanker, you basically said that there's only one. I think you kind of glided over a couple that used to be more important to you, if I remember your earlier statements. One is the NEA requirement for quotas, and the other is the secret ballot provision that the NEA has, and the AFT does not have. What about those two differences?

SHANKER: Well, these are current organizational differences, but I don't view them as being of monumental or earth-shaking importance. I don't know why the only delegates who have their way paid to a national convention to represent their members, who have the right to vote in secret, and their members will never know how they've voted. The NEA is the only large organization I know of that does that.

And I think the quota issue . . . .

MERROW: The quota issue -- just, by way of explanation, essentially requires that if a minority hasn't been President of the NEA within the previous twelve years, I think it is, then one shall be in the 13th year. Which is clearly a quota system. Go on. Excuse me.

SHANKER: Well, they only have that requirement for the President. They don't have it for the Executive Secretary. So, they've already worked out a compromise in their own organization. (laughter) But, seriously, I think that, as I see it, the quota thing was big in our country a few years ago. There were even a few court decisions which moved in that direction. Everybody wanted to show that they were aware of the fact that there has been past discrimination and continues to be effects of past discrimination, and some present discrimination.

But, as I see it, the whole movement toward quotas - whether it be in admissions to schools, or in jobs, or in anything else - that we're moving away from that as a society. And I don't see any great embrace of that within the NEA either. I went to a number of conventions, and I would say that there were quite a few states that had problems with that. I saw some things that came out of Michigan, Terry's home state, where elections of local associations had to be invalidated, and a manual was sent out saying - "Here's how to make sure that one-out-of-every-seven is a minority, or one-out-of-every-six . . ." - Now we get into the question of why aren't the Italians considered a minority, or Armenians, or somebody else. Why only some minorities?

And, there, too, I don't think the teachers of America would say that that issue is the thing that should keep them apart. And I would venture to guess that if the members of the National Education Association were given a secret ballot referendum vote as to whether they favor the idea that every executive board and negotiating committee and delegation in the country should be proportionate to the following racial and ethnic groups, I think that it would be turned down overwhelmingly - if there were free debate within the organization.

MERROW: Mr. Herndon?

HERNDON: We had 9,000 delegates assembled in Miami this summer. There were amendments proposed to repeal those guarantees in our Constitution. Those amendments were voted on by secret ballot of those 9,000 delegates and the amendments were overwhelmingly rejected.

Our position on ethnic minority representation has very deep historical and emotional roots, and they're very real in our organization. We are over 100 years old. We've had affiliates in all of the states for all those 100 years. That means at one time in the United States, we had affiliates in all of the states of the former Confederacy, where there were two school districts operated - one for Blacks, one for whites. There was a teacher association for Blacks, and a teacher association for whites. We have achieved merger of those organizations in all of those states - with the exception of Louisiana, and we are very close there. The fact that we failed there caused us to expell the formerly all-white organization, and our affiliate there is substantially Black.

But in the other cases - where you had an organization that was two-thirds, or three-fourths, white, merging with a much smaller Black organization, there was great concern, and great fear, that the Black tradition, and the Black presence, would be eliminated as the Southern white group took control of their organization. And ethnic minority guaranteed representation was absolutely essential for the completion of that process.

MERROW: But is it still? That's the question.

HERNDON: It is very real to the people in those states, and we have seen it work. It has produced a healthy situation within the NEA, and seeing that healthy situation developed has created advocates for that position in other states. We have subsequently had those kinds of guarantees adopted in Northern states - even before NEA's new Constitution.

SHANKER: Well, we've had a long tradition, too. We haven't existed for 100 years. Unlike the NEA, the AFT was amicus in the 1954 Supreme Court case - as was its New York local - and two years after the Supreme Court spoke, we expelled those Southern locals that were segregated locals. We

lost quite a few members. As a matter of fact, we expelled more members in Atlanta at the time than we had in New York City.

But I do not believe that the members of the NEA are forever going to live with a system of quotas. The question is -- How long does one maintain something that's essentially a racist practice after you've developed a scheme for integration?

HERNDON: Well, I think the most important point to be made is -- To describe that as essentially a racist practice, in my mind, represents great insensitivity to contemporary reality in American life today. Race is a factor. It's a factor in every major social institution in the United States. And the fact is that in our society there have been a number of mechanisms working to exclude people other than those of the majority type. It was the judgment of the people who framed those documents in our Constitutional Convention - and I agree with that judgment - that the mechanisms in our society have discriminated against Blacks, Chicanos, and Hispanics, American Indians, and Asians.

SHANKER: How about Poles?

HERNDON: I think that's a piece of our history, but it's not a piece of our contemporary reality.

SHANKER: Well, I wish you'd take a look at how many Presidents have been of various ethnic groups in the NEA, and see whether perhaps others haven't been excluded?

HERNDON: Well, I'd be pleased for you to present that profile for us, Al.

SHANKER: I'm sure you can do that for yourself.

MERROW: The secret ballot question -- How important is that to NEA?

HERNDON: Well, it is important, but I think it's important as a symbol of a lot of complex, interacting, structural aspects of the organization. I agree with Al that there are many possibilities around that issue. I don't think our people are prepared to just set it aside, and say - "We're not going to have it." I think that if, as he said about doing away with it, if Al Shanker and Terry Herndon appeared before America's teachers and said - "We've worked out the terms of coexistence. We're going to merge. And that includes secret ballot." - they would accept that, too.

MERROW: Then both of you are hypothetically saying that you could appear before the American people and announce a merger. But, in fact, you're farther away from a merger now than you've been in a long, long time, and there's some real struggles going on in several states. Maybe, we could go and review the battlefield. And let's talk about who's winning, and what the issues are. I could start on either coast, I guess. Let's start with New York. There was an affiliate - a joint affiliate - the New York State United Teachers. That was the NEA & the AFT together. Now, they're separate. How come? Why did they split up, and what's going on now? Mr. Herndon?

HERNDON: Well, we have considerably different views on that. From our view, the merger occurred in New York a good while ago. We addressed that in good faith. We affiliated that merged organization. But over a period of several years, it appeared to us that the leadership was endeavoring to carry that organization in an inexorable drift away from the NEA.

MERROW: New York is, after all, Mr. Shanker's power base.

HERNDON: That's absolutely certain. And deliver the organization that formerly had been a NEA affiliate into the AFT completely.

MERROW: And, so, you decided on a visibility campaign.

HERNDON: No. We decided that we would respond to that, and carry our cause to our membership directly. We presented that to our affiliate in New York, and they responded with hostility. That was not a surprise to us. I should indicate that. It was a surprise to us as to how far they carried that when they decided that they would disaffiliate from the NEA.

Now, at that time, of course, the locals in New York had a choice again. They could affiliate with either the AFT or with the NEA. And a number of them indicated that they had that preference. And, so, we proceeded to set up the state organization that would make that possible. As of the closing of school, we had over 100 locals that had indicated they would withdraw from NYSUT and affiliate with NEA. I don't think that either of us is going to know until January or February of the coming year exactly what the outcome is going to be with the decisions being made regarding New York.

MERROW: A culpability question.

SHANKER: Well, first, on the hundred locals - so far I would say that that report is correct, but there are 100 rather small locals with one or two exceptions, those 100 locals have a total of 13,000 members out of the 220,000 members at stake. One of those locals accounts for a major part of it - about 3,700. I disagree completely that the issue in New York State has been culpability.

MERROW: What's the issue?

SHANKER: I think the issue is very simple. The teachers of New York State have had something over the last five years which they never felt before. They've had one organization with 220,000 members. They've had the experience of electing Mayors and Legislators and Governors. They've had the experience of picking up a phone and talking to political figures who had never talked to them before. They've had the experience of passing Pension bills and State Aid bills, and the experience of having gone on strike in a number of places, and having a network of 17 service centers and a large staff, and more full time attorneys than any other state affiliate or combination of them within the NEA. They have never had the kind of power, and the kind of service that they have.

The simple thing that we address ourselves to when we talk to teachers in New York State is not who did it first, or who did it second, or who did it third. It's a tough world. People are being laid off. Many people are being forced to go out on strike. There's only one thing that you've got going for you, and that is you've got a united organization, and the best that the NEA can do, if it succeeds, is to divide us again, have two competing organizations in the state, and the only way you can prevent them from doing it is to stick with what you've got. That's what appeals to teachers. And that's why I'm staying with it.

MERROW: Mr. Herndon said that they came into New York because they felt that AFT was taking over New York State United Teachers. Why do you think that NEA wants to come into New York?

SHANKER: Well, I don't think that there's any question but that the experience of New York teachers at both conventions led most of them to have more affection for the AFT than the NEA. That's different though from the question of were we inevitably going to disafilliate. If that is what Terry thought, then he should have sat down, and said - "Look. This is what we think. We think that one or two or three or five or ten years from now you're getting ready to get out. And what we need are assurances. And we want them to be binding and legal assurances." And then, if we had said - "No. We're not willing to assure you that we'll stay in." - then, that would have been something else. Well, as a matter of fact, we made those assurances. They're in writing. They were publicly stated. They are there. They're on the table. And it's not that it was out of love or affection for the NEA. It was a desire to maintain complete unity within the state of New York. We felt that we were perfectly willing to send the money into the NEA if they don't compell us to love them. We don't have to love them. We just felt that it was worth the money to keep 'em away. And I still think so.

MERROW: There's another way to look at this, and people inside the NEA say this to me. "Shanker is vulnerable. The AFT is losing dues from teachers who are being let go, and every teacher that the NEA takes away, this chips away at Al Shanker's power base."

HERNDON: I think that's probably true. But that has nothing to do with the decisions made in regards to New York State. So long as NYSUT remained as an affiliate of NEA in good standing, there could have been no means by which the NEA could have created the division in the State of New York. We simply did not have that opportunity. We were. one could say, coopted by the affiliate relationship.

SHANKER: Well, we were an NEA affiliate in good standing when you sent staff people in the state, and when you bought commercials over television, and when you started going in and buying out staff members and offering them thousands of dollars in salary increases, and opening your offices across the street. That all happened while we were an affiliate.

HERNDON: Well, I would obviously characterize the things that we did in New York a bit differently than Al does. But I think the important thing is that sending staff people into the state, promoting NEA by television, promoting NEA by direct communication with local leaders, it is in no way inimical to the interests of NYSUT, unless NYSUT wishes for that relationship to be a weak relationship.

SHANKER: No. It's very inimical to the interests of teachers in New York State - when you've got teachers negotiating with school boards - as you did throughout most places in the state - and there's on-camera commercials saying the NEA with its $14 million fund for so-and-so, and local people writing into their newspapers -- "Well, if the teachers have all that money, they don't need a salary increase." The people in Syracuse, Rochester, on Long Island, throughout the state of New York don't want somebody from Washington flying in, telling them what to do, telling them what's good for them to say to their local people on television.

What we're dealing with here is a highly centralized NEA bureaucracy that doesn't have to bother asking anybody in these localities. Somebody down here in PR decides to fly in, and spend $300-$600,000 on a television campaign in New York State that's supposed to help the teachers, but they never bother asking the teachers or the leaders of teachers of New York State.

HERNDON: Al is probably one of the more diligent students of the NEA in the United States, and he knows that what he says is simply not true. He knows that what happened in New York is not a customary kind of response for NEA. He knows that it's not symbolic of NEA. It is not representative of the way that we respond to normal situations. There was nothing normal about the situation.

We had a state organization, led by a group of people, representing 200,000 members, and they were proceeding to withdraw from the NEA. That's a very, very unique situation. We've not had to deal with before. And it would have been foolish for us not to have responded.

MERROW: Make a prediction, if you will. How's it going to come out? There are 796 locals, 220,000 teachers. When the dust settles, who is going to belong to what? Mr. Shanker?

SHANKER: I think more than 90% of the teachers in the State of New York will remain with NYSUT.

MERROW: So, you're saying that the AFT is going to win overwhelmingly in New York State.

SHANKER: Well, I don't think it's a victory for the AFT. The AFT is not conducting any campaigns in the State of New York. This is a fight of the New York State United Teachers and its locals under attack by the National Education Association. I'm saying to you that we're not pulling out. We're ready to stay. We're ready to pay dues to both national organizations. All we want is, one, to be left alone, and, two, if we're in trouble and need some help, that's what our national organizations are for. We expect them to lobby. We expect them to do research, and if we're in trouble, we expect help. We do not expect them to come in and tell us how to run our affairs. We don't expect them to interfere with our internal operations. Once that happened, we had no choice.

MERROW: Mr. Herndon, do you expect 90% to stay with New York State United Teachers?

HERNDON: Absolutely not. I think that's a fantasy.

MERROW: How many do you expect to go with the NEA affiliate?

HERNDON: I think within one year of the date of disaffiliation - which is March of this Spring - the NEA will have 50,000 or more members in New York State.

MERROW: The NEA will or NEA's affiliate in New York?

HERNDON: NEA and its affiliate in New York will have the same members and we expect that that state organization will be a growing organization in the years to come.

SHANKER: Well, that was the prediction for the first year. If you'll take a look at the very first literature that came out of NEA on their raid in New York State, you'll find that their prediction was that within the last school year that they would have more than 50,000. Well, they've got locals that used to have 13,000 members in their membership. Whether all 13,000 are now going to stay with them, or whether many of them will still remain with NYSUT remains to be seen. But they were way off at that time, and I'd say they're way off right now.

MERROW: People on the West Coast and the rest of the country may be thinking that they're listening to some discussion of New York, but, in fact, this is OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, and you're listening to a debate between the President of the American Federation of Teachers,

Albert Shanker, and the Executive Director of the National Education Association, Terry Herndon, talking about battles that have been going on all around the country.

Let's now just jump to the other coast - California, where a big struggle is going on. If the AFT is going to win overwhelmingly in New York - which is a matter of some dispute between you two - isn't it likely that in California the NEA is going to win? And let's get some background?

New legislation took effect April 1st which allows for an extensive collective bargaining agreement, and the two unions are battling to be the single representative in each district. Who's winning in California? Mr. Shanker?

SHANKER: Well, at the present time, in terms of numbers, which is the way you count these wins, the NEA had started with, and will have when the elections are all over, the overwhelming majority of teachers in the State. What the AFT hopes to do, and I believe that we will, after this round of elections, is that we will end up with more members at the end of the elections than we had at the beginning, and we'll have a base to continue organizing. And we believe that at the end of these struggles in California, the NEA will be certainly by far the largest. It starts as the largest, and it's going to end as the largest at the end of this first round, but we're going to be better off than when we were before. And there will be a second round, and a third one. And when it's over, we think we'll be in much better shape than we are now.

MERROW: Mr. Herndon:

HERNDON: I certainly agree that we start with the largest organization, and we'll come out with the largest organization. I think we will have more members when it's over than we have now. Because that's one of the natural impacts of exclusive representation. This Spring there have been some dozen elections in California. We've won the overwhelming majority of those. There will probably be a hundred or so this Fall. We will win a like portion of those.

MERROW: But there are 1200 school districts in all. How do you expect it to come out over all?

HERNDON: Well, there's going to be over 900 of those - where the NEA wins without competition. So, we're obviously going to have an overwhelming majority.

MERROW: What about the big cities? How do the big cities shake down?

HERNDON: Well, Los Angeles is a merged local.

SHANKER: So, both are going to win there. (laughter)

SHANKER: That's the way it should be - all over the country. So, you asked - "Who's going to win in these battles?" I'll tell you. All teachers in this country are going to lose in them.

HERNDON: San Francisco is a toss-up at this time. Other big cities, Oakland and Berkeley -- I think Berkeley is a toss-up, and in Oakland we will win. San Diego we will win.

SHANKER: I don't agree with those. I think we're going to win them. But we'll know soon enough. I think we'll know within the next six months in practically all of these big cities.

MERROW: The struggle between the two unions -- Florida has been a big battle ground, and there was a movement toward unity, and now it's fragmented. What's the situation there? Mr. Herndon?

HERNDON: Well, at the present time in Florida we have 28,000 members. We represent the teachers in the majority of the districts in the State of Florida. But we don't know exactly what the state of the AFT is. I suppose Mr. Shanker can comment on that. One reason being that that s the place where they're not unified, and their state affiliate in Florida has locals that are affiliated with the AFT, and locals that don't have a national affiliation. So, it creates a difficult pattern. Things are going well. I think we're doing well in the elections that are held in the State of Florida. We have a very bad bargaining law, and a bad bargaining climate, and the negotiations are very tough and not as productive as we'd like them to be. But, all in all, we think we're doing well in Florida.

MERROW: Mr. Shanker, I think the AFT has 45,000 members in Florida.

SHANKER: No, we do not. The FEA United has just over 30,000 members. 17,000 of those are members of the AFT. At the present time, that number is growing. And we do hope to get some additional affiliations. We have this year a number of counties which have come over, and we've done very well there. Our figures on the NEA are a little different. We have figures that show them at 16,000, but they do have a larger number of places, but they're smaller places.

MERROW: What about other parts of the country where the struggle to organize is going on?

HERNDON: We have occasional conflict and competition in New England. We have it throughout the Midwest - in Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana, Missouri . . .

SHANKER: All over.

HERNDON: All over. But Florida, California, New York are the states where there's big conflict statewide. The other organizing is for more constructive purposes - collective bargaining bills, state aid, things of that nature.

MERROW: There are other places that struggles are going on. I suppose higher education, post-secondary education is one. What is the status there? How is the AFT doing in its attempt to organize college faculty?

SHANKER: Well, I don't think anybody is doing as well there as we have done in elementary and secondary. It's certainly a lot slower, but there you have higher education. You still have a kind of star system where in many institutions employees feel that they're much better off in negotiating for themselves; that their fate is not bound up with what happens to their colleagues; that their fate depends on the merit of each individual moving up the promotional ladder. And wherever you have that, it's always more difficult to organize. But there have been a number of institutions that have voted for no union. As far as I know in elementary and secondary it's rare, indeed. It's not that unusual in higher education. And, organizationally, you have sort of a three-way fight going on here - the American Association of University Professors is in it. The AFT, the NEA, and in some cases you get Faculty Senates, which are not affiliated with anybody but an indigenous local organization that gains the bargaining rights. But we have made very great headway, and it's one of our great areas of growth, and we're continuing to work in this field.

MERROW: Of the three - NEA, AFT, and the American Association of University Professors - who has organized more faculty?

HERNDON: Well, in terms of contracts and force, I think we'd have to say that no contract or no union is in first place. Right behind that is the NEA, and then the AAUP, and then the AFT.

SHANKER: That's in number of contracts, but if you talk numbers of people in these bargaining units, then the AFT is first. But, of course, the no contract doesn't count. But when you count just the number of the large institutions that we have, then the City University in New York, the State University, some of the colleges in New Jersey where we just won narrowly - but won in a contest with the NEA, and a number of others. When you take these large ones, and a few of the smaller ones, we have the largest number of people in higher education under contract in the country.

HERNDON: I don't accept that figure. If we're talking about members in higher education, I think AAUP, at this time, has more than either of us. If you're talking about members under contract, I believe that NEA is the leader in that respect.

MERROW: Is that going to be a big focus in the years ahead for both of you?

HERNDON: Obviously so. That's a large field, a lot of people - and, as we indicated, we both indicated the largest number of them are not organized.

MERROW: When you talk about the fun-and-games of fighting each other, I guess as a parent . . . How long is the fight going to go on? And what are the possible outcomes? Mr. Herndon?

HERNDON: Well, I'm not sure what you mean by possible outcomes, John. I expect that we'll continue to fight as long as we have two sets of preferences. We've got 1.8 million people. They prefer one kind of organization. They think it's the organization they want to be a part of. They have 400-500,000 who prefer a different kind of organization. We both agree that we have some common cause that is of great urgency, and is probably more important than the issues that separate us.

MERROW: What's the goal?

HERNDON: But who's going to capitulate? Does the 1.8 million deny themselves their preference?

SHANKER: No. Not capitulate. Compromise. Negotiate. Let everything be open to negotiation and compromise - because the goal of bringing teachers together is much more important than these fights which divide us. Nothing is more important than bringing the teachers of the country together.

MERROW: But when you said "compromise", and you said this at your convention meeting this summer . . . we asked you about the issues to compromise on, and you essentially said - "The NEA will sooner or later wise up, and retract its stand on quotas and accept the secret ballot . . ."

SHANKER: No. I could think of real compromises on every single one of the issues that seem to separate us - and on those that haven't been publicly aired. I've never seen any issue of this sort that wasn't capable of some sort of compromise.

MERROW: I can think of an issue that might not be susceptible to compromise - and that's Albert Shanker. Suppose there's a merger of the two groups. Is there room in a "United Teacher Association" - whatever it would be called - for Terry Herndon and Albert Shanker?

HERNDON: Well, first, let's assume that the substantive issues were resolved. I think there would be enough room in that organization for Herndon & Shanker as Herndon & Shanker can win. There won't be any negotiations around Herndon and Shanker. I don't believe that either of us are an obstacle. There are substantive differences that have not been reconciled.

MERROW: But you're both extremely powerful leaders. You're both used to being the leader, to calling the shots. Only one person can call the shots.

SHANKER: Well, I've never taken that view either. I think that if you had one organization with 3 million teachers in this country, it could use all the talent it could possibly get. I haven't seen very many organizations in this country that have so much talent that they can afford to get rid of it.

MERROW: Would you be willing to work for Terry Herndon?

SHANKER: I might be.

MERROW: Would you be willing to work for Albert Shanker?

HERNDON: I might be.

SHANKER: Yes. We've worked that one out. (laughter)

HERNDON: The idea of Herndon or John Ryor calling the shots on the one hand or Al Shanker calling the shots for the AFT - that's good press, but it's not very close to reality. In both organizations, there are very complicated political realities which have to be dealt with. And neither of us call a lot of shots. We don't just sit back and . . . .

MERROW: Now, I've seen both of you call a lot of shots. So, that's hard to accept. But I appreciate your remarks.

HERNDON: Well, obviously, all of those who arrive at leadership have influence. And they are leaders - or they would not be in those positions. Having influence is a different matter than being able to sit in isolation and decide how things are going to be, and just pass it out.

SHANKER: I think there's no question that bringing all the teachers together is the right thing to do for teachers. It's the right thing to do for schools. Beyond that, it's the right thing to do for this country. Because, then, teachers could exert a really spectacular force in this country for things that are good -- even beyond education. Whether the teachers will do that or not is an open question. The world is filled with historical examples of - "If people had only done the intelligent thing, everything would have worked out differently." But they didn't. They chose to kill each other, or to destroy each other.

MERROW: You said - "Destroy each other". Is the NEA embarked on a campaign now to raid the AFT and ultimately destroy the AFT?

SHANKER: Well, both organizations are embarked on raiding the other organization. Obviously, as long as you have two separate organizations, and each organization rightfully believes that it can be more effective if it has more members, and more money, then the place you get more members . . . well, you get more members in two places. You get those who are not yet organized, and you get those who are organized in the other organization. And at one time, when the NEA was

against collective bargaining - and we were f[illegible]it, or they were against it - any right to strike. Or they didn't want to organize teachers . . . well, there was such basic differences between the organizations, that it would be ridiculous to say that the groups should get together. We just stood for things that were so diametrically opposed. Well, now, we agree on these things. And Terry says that we even agree on a bunch of social issues - although I'd like to see them written about in his publications, and would like his members to know that he stands for these things. But I assume that's true of the leadership of the organization. Well, it's a shame to think that we favor collective bargaining, the right to strike and National Health Security, and Humphrey-Hawkins, and fifty other things that we could put down -- all of which, if we could get one-third of them, might very well change the future of this country - but we can't work together effectively in a single organization because of quotas, secret ballot, AFL-CIO. We can't somehow work out reasonable compromises on these issues. I don't believe it. I believe that compromises can be worked out, and, if they're not worked out, it's because people don't want to.

MERROW: Mr. Herndon?

HERNDON: Well, we made that effort. We did have some negotiations.

SHANKER: Oh, come on. That wasn't an effort.

MERROW: That was three years ago.

HERNDON: No. Our convention this year passed a resolution authorizing the President to proceed with those conversations if he has cause to believe that they'll be productive.

MERROW: Yes. And you passed some other resolutions which stipulated that you don't have to join the AFL-CIO.

HERNDON: True. Because merger is not possible under those terms. All of our data - in terms of the disposition of our members, who are the majority of America's teachers - indicate that they believe those things.

MERROW: Is the NEA now trying to raid the AFT's supply of teachers, and, in effect, get rid of the AFT?

HERNDON: I think those are, in fact, different questions. We are an organization of more than 1.8 million people. We believe that America's teachers ought to be unified. So, we'd like to see the 1.8 at 2 1/2. We're taking them where we can get 'em. And that means we're raiding some AFT locals.

MERROW: Do you think the AFT is particularly vulnerable right now?

HERNDON: I think that's a localized question. I don't think that the AFT nationally is particularly vulnerable. I think they have locals that are vulnerable, and we have locals that are vulnerable. I think that New York is very unsettled. We have to wait and see how that settles out. Obviously, we both had 220,000 members last year. And neither of us will have that many next year. So, each organization is going to be injured by what's happened in New York in terms of numbers of members.

MERROW: The loss proportionately hurts Mr. Shanker's AFT more than it hurts the NEA.

HERNDON: If it were a total loss, that would be the case. Yes. A loss of 200,000 members to the NEA would be equivalent to a loss of 50,000 in the AFT. So, I indicated that I think we will have 50,000 members. I think we will probably suffer in commensurate degrees in New York.

MERROW: Mr. Shanker, the question of AFT's vulnerability. In '74 and '75, you ran a budget deficit of about $35,000. Last year, you ran a budget deficit of nearly $500,000. Does that indicate that you're in trouble?

SHANKER: That's happened before. We've run deficits, and this year we just adopted a dues increase which still leaves us below what the NEA's dues are. It brings us up to about $30 - where theirs is committed in the future to $35. That will permit us to balance just about the first year, and, certainly, the second year. But balancing the budget, of course, is not like running a real estate proposition where you have a fully rented house. Obviously, if New York City should close down or go bankrupt, we'd be hurt. On the other hand, if there were some major Federal programs which would once again result in employment of teachers, that would result in a pick-up. Actually, the AFT had a great organizing year this year. We probably organized more teachers this year than ever before in our history, and we would have been well over the half-million mark except that with lay-offs in a number of cities, and reductions in force, we had to organize very hard just to stand still.

The NEA is growing. A lot of that growth is internal - teachers who were members of state organizations which have now unified. And, of course, that is increased income to the NEA, but they're not new association members. No, I don't think we're in trouble, but I do think that as long as the economy is the way it is we're going to have hard times. Teachers are going to have them individually, and we have them as an organization. When we get a bunch of lay-offs, it means higher class size. It means cutbacks for children. It means that teachers are suffering in terms of their working conditions, and it means that everyone of those laid off teachers are no longer dues payers in the organization.

MERROW: Maybe we could spend the last part of this time talking about money and about politics. I know the money crunch is here. It's been here now for a number of years now. Do you expect that if a Carter-Mondale ticket gets elected that things are going to change - things will improve?

SHANKER: Well, certainly I don't expect all these vetos of over 50 pieces of social legislation which we found in this Administration. And there are commitments on the part of Carter and Mondale, both personally. Mondale has a great track record in the Congress of the United States - and, of course, there is the Party platform. I think as far as teachers are concerned, there's no question. We had at our AFT Convention . . . I think that if eight years ago if someone had ever told me that you'd go to a convention with thousands of teachers, you'd get unanimous approval on a presidential ticket, I would have brought in a psychiatrist. But that's exactly what happened.

MERROW: Well, now the AFT has already endorsed, as you say, Carter and Mondale.

SHANKER: Yes.

MERROW: Unanimously. The NEA is, I guess you'd say, a leadpipe cinch to endorse Carter and Mondale.

HERNDON: Well, I recently had a similar shock. Our Political Action Committee met this past weekend to prepare the ballot that's going to our delegates to vote on the matter of endorsement. And following the preparation of the ballot, the representatives from each of the states voted unanimously to recommend endorsement of the Carter-Mondale ticket. So, there we have another point of agreement. Both organizations unanimously supporting Carter-Mondale. I don't know if that has ever happened in the history of American education - that all the representatives of all of the teachers agree to anything. So, things are going to get better.

SHANKER: We didn't end up unanimous on our roll call vote on that. That was only on a voice vote. But we did end up with 94% on the roll call, which is very good.

MERROW: What does that mean for the Democratic Ticket? What are teachers going to contribute? Now, I know that both the NEA and AFT worked hard to have a lot of delegates to the Democratic Convention hoping that teachers would play a role in what people expected to be a brokered convention; that you would have a lot of clout in deciding who the nominee was going to be. But, in fact, it didn't work out that way. Jimmy Carter ran away with it, and Mr. Shanker, you endorsed Jackson earlier, but now you're sort of having to come to Carter and saying - "We can help, too." But how can you help. What are teachers going to do?

HERNDON: We have a very high registration among teachers. And we have a lot of teachers. You have a group that is 85 to 90% registered. You have 2 1/2 million people. The individuals that they contact. The influence they have on spouses, friends, relatives, etc. So, there is a substantial amount of votes there. But some of our surveys also indicate that the public is very favorably impressed by endorsements made by teachers, and we think that people are going to look closely. The public feels good about schools. They feel good about teachers. They care about schools. The Congress over-rode vetos of educational appropriations. I think as we come forth and indicate that these candidates have a favorable position on schools and what it means to the future of children, that's going to influence many other people.

MERROW: You're saying that the public is, in fact, influenced by teachers endorsing a certain candidate.

HERNDON: I believe it. A substantial portion of the public will be. More importantly than that, perhaps, is that we have an organized group of very capable people who are well educated in virtually every community in the United States. And that represents a formidable group of campaign workers for any candidate.

MERROW: Mr. Shanker?

SHANKER: Yes. I agree with that. We have telephone banks. We're involved in a massive voter registration campaign all across the country, and remember that we're not in this for the Presidential candidate alone. That's very important. Certainly the last eight years have shown that you can have a very good Congress, but you can't get very much through if you don't have the man in the White House. But we will also be working to see that friends of education and labor are elected in the House and Senate and the State Legislatures throughout the country. We'll be involved in gubernatorial races. It's not a presidential ticket alone. We've mobilized

hundreds of thousands who will be very active in politics at every level. I think it's going to make a very, very great difference in terms of the future commitment to education.

MERROW: Does Jimmy Carter owe you anything?

SHANKER: Well, I don't know. I guess he owes us as much as he owes anybody else. You mean because I wasn't one of his delegates first? Maybe he can count on those who were with him first - and maybe he needs those who weren't with him before more. I think he appreciates everyone's support. I've met with him, and I'm convinced that he has a very good program, and I'm convinced that he'll make a very good President. And he didn't talk to me about coming on late, and I didn't talk to him about some of the earlier positions that he took in the campaign that I was pretty unhappy with - small government and not helping cities. (laughter)

HERNDON: I don't think he owes us in as much as we don't address candidates in that format. We don't try to buy candidates, and we don't try to put them in a position where they owe us. We know him. He's available to us. He's accessible to us. We talk with him. So we have an opportunity to present our views. And we would expect to have that.

MERROW: We are back to Square #1 - and I'd like to ask you - and perhaps with a prediction about this fall - maybe I could cast it in this light. The Supreme Court in the Hortonville Decision, in effect, upheld the right of a school board to fire striking teachers under certain circumstances. I know that the School Boards Association is training its training boards around the country, and trying really to urge them to figure out ways to perhaps win back some of the things they bargained away. Now, the other school boards won't pay attention to the training, but will just kind of blunder in there and say - "Well, we won that case. We have a right to fire striking teachers. Let's not give those teachers anything."

Last year you had a record - 203 strikes. What's going to happen this fall? Mr. Shanker?

SHANKER: Well, there's sort of a double-crunch on us. Certainly, with the state of the economy, the increasing lay-offs, the movement within states of money into fields away from education to keep people alive because of the recession, there will be an awful lot of incentives for teachers to go out; to just hold on to what they have. Most of last year's strikes were defensive strikes. I didn't see anywhere where a group of teachers were going out in order to vastly improve their standard of living.

MERROW: Defensive strikes?

SHANKER: Defensive. They were strikes to hold on to what people already had; what they had won in previous years. So, there will be that movement and that pressure for strikes to hold on to gains previously made. On the other hand, there will be the reality principle that the costliness of strikes is much greater right now. A school board that's under these economic pressures doesn't care as much if schools are closed.

Last year in New York City I think that there were some people who hoped that schools would be on strike all year, and that would have balanced the City budget.

MERROW: Strikes hurt workers more. Is that what you're saying?

SHANKER: Yes. During the Depression, there was no question about it - whether it's the public or the private sector. When you're dealing

with hard times like these, a strike is something that's almost welcomed by management - whether it be public management or private management. It's a lot tougher to win.

MERROW: Mr. Herndon, what should we expect this fall?

HERNDON: I don't see that much has changed. So, I would expect that we will have probably the same number of strikes that we had this prior year - because the teachers are not going to accept that, and if school boards say - "Times are hard for teachers. We can treat them as we will." - teachers will strike.

Now, those school boards that deal with the 6,000 teacher locals that don't strike in good faith, and say - "Times are tough. We don't have the money we'd like to have. But we respect you and we'd like to sit down together and reason together, and find a solution that we both can live with." - we won't have strikes. So. I don't think it's the hard economic times that are generating the strikes as much as school boards and employers in small numbers who try to exploit those hard economic times, and convince themselves that teachers are afraid to strike, they won't strike, that the price is too high, and they can, therefore, treat them anyway they choose.

MERROW: And you're saying that they will strike?

HERNDON: They will strike if they are abused. Yes.

MERROW: You've been listening to a debate between Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers, and Terry Herndon, Executive Director of the National Education Association - probably the two most powerful people in American public education. If you'd like to read what you just heard, write for a transcript. Send 25¢ to National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D. C. 20036. Ask for Program #43.

For OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, this is John Merrow.

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